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Legislative Testimony for the
Association of BellTel Retirees in Support of Raised Bill No. 5445
Public Hearing, Insurance and Real Estate Committee
March 3, 2016

Greetings members of the Committee on Insurance and Real Estate. My name is Edward Chromczak and I am a member of the Association of BellTel Retirees. I retired from a local telephone company in 1991 and have been a member of this association which represents retired craft and management workers, since 1997.

I am here to express my concerns about my future because of actions taken not only the corporation that I worked for during 35 years of my life, but, of the potential actions that could be taken by the company now controlling what was my pension and is now an annuity.

The Raised Bill No. 5445, entitled "An Act Concerning the Purchase of an Annuity to Fund Pension Benefits" is legislation that is worthy of your support. This bill is relevant to many of us residing in Connecticut who have retired from corporations that provided employee earned retirement benefits which have been sold to insurance companies as an annuity and are no longer protected under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). Under ERISA we received annual statements that detailed the change in funded status year over year along with any changes in asset allocations or actuarial assumptions that could impact on our future payouts. As we all learned during the financial crisis, no company is too big to fail and these insurance companies are no exception. I didn't work a day in my life for the insurance company, and now I have no idea how secure my monthly payments will be in the event the insurance company defaults or transfers this contract to another company.

Since many of the protections afforded by ERISA, have been eliminated for retirees like me it does not seem unreasonable to ask the insurance company to provide statements that let us know how things are going, providing the investment performance and to warn us in advance of a transfer to a third party. These are important steps for retirees like me who were shifted from pension plans, to annuities without their consent. Hopefully Raised Bill No. 5445 will help retirees' peace of mind; please support Raised Bill No. 5445. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Edward P. Chromczak